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## What's in a name? The case of Brazilian children in Japanese public schools\*

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これは、日本在住の日系ブラジル人の子どもたちが自分の名前をどのように使っているかを検証する、エスノグラフィーによる研究である。彼らは祖先の母国日本に、単純労働力として働く場を見つけた親に連れられて来日したのだが、就労を可能にする日本人配偶者等のビザの申請に際して、自分が日系人であることを証明せねばならなかった。この証明を助けるものとして日系名があった。

本研究のきっかけとなったのは、公立学校で使われている子どもたちの名前と、市町村の教育委員会に登録された名前が一致していないという事実である。本論文は、日系人の個人名が、適応過程に対する日系人ならびにより大きな社会の態度を、どのように反映しているかを示す。

一般的には、日本社会は均一性と同質性を非常に重視し、徹底しようとする、と考えられている。教育現場においては、子どもが日系名のみを使う方がクラスメートに受け入れられやすいと信じ、そうさせる親たちがいる。そこでは、子どもたちが本当はどう呼ばれたいのかとか、親や先生に強制的に選ばれた呼び名が本当に子どもの望むものなのかとかは、考慮されない。本論文は、子どもの名前の使用に対する社会的強制がどのように課せられているかも組上に載せる。

日本の公立小中学校に通う外国籍児童・生徒の数は年を追って増え、公教育の現場では文化的・言語的多様性の背景が生まれ、異文化間の相互理解を促進するための努力も行われている。にもかかわらず、学校での子どもたちの個人名の使用を見る限り、多様性を覆い隠すという、まったく逆方向へ向かっていると云わざるを得ないのだ。

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\*名前は何を示す？日本の公立学校に在籍するブラジル人の子どもの事例を通して（幡野光美リリアン）

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## 1. Introduction

This study examines the usage of names among Brazilian Nikkeijin<sup>1)</sup> children in Japan<sup>2)</sup>. They have accompanied their parents who have been migrating to the country of their ancestors in recent years as unskilled workers. They must prove their Japanese ancestry to be eligible for the visa status of spouse or child of a Japanese national.<sup>3)</sup> Having a Japanese name seems to help them in this process.

The research question arose when discrepancies were discovered between names newcomer children<sup>4)</sup> currently used in schools and those found on the registers of the local Board of Education. This paper shows how the usage of their names reflect both their attitudes and those of the larger society towards their integration process.

From a general view, Japanese society puts a great priority on uniformity and equalization, and efforts are concentrated in trying to maintain it, even at a superficial level<sup>5)</sup>. Within the educational setting it can be illustrated by the different naming strategies taken in which some parents believe that using only Japanese names will facilitate their children's acceptance by the majority group. It does not always take into account the fact that the way children wish to be addressed and identified may be different from the one chosen by their parents or sometimes teachers without their consultation. Here, what will be discussed are the ways society can impose constraints on the choice<sup>6)</sup> of children's names through some case studies.

The great diversity in the cultural and linguistic backgrounds evident in Japan is reflected in the increasing number of foreign children enrolled in Japanese public elementary and junior high schools each year. It must be recognized that some efforts are being made to promote mutual understanding among different cultures in Japan. Nevertheless, when personal names are of concern, the trend seems to be moving in an opposite direction, where diversity is completely hidden under the names chosen to be

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<sup>1)</sup> Nikkeijin is the term used for all Japanese descendants but in recent years they mostly indicate the South Americans from Brazil and Peru.

<sup>2)</sup> Refer to Ota (2000), Sellek (1997) about newcomers in Japan and Nakanishi and Sato (1995) about educational programs towards the foreign children and teenagers.

<sup>3)</sup> Refer to Japan Immigration Association (ed.) (1997).

<sup>4)</sup> In Ota (2000), he did a fieldwork research from the educational perspective about the the newcomer children and the Japanese school. We would like to use his definition of newcomer children: "Newcomer children are those who very recently started coming to Japan, who were born in a foreign country, grown up in a foreign country and at the time they were rematriculated in the Japanese schools, they almost could not speak Japanese at all"

<sup>5)</sup> Refer to Maher and Macdonald (eds.) (1995) and Weiner (ed.) (1997) about Japan's diversity.

<sup>6)</sup> Refer to Alatis (1955), Maass (1958), Stahl (1994), Louie (1998), Klymasz (1963), part I, II and III for an overview of different migrant groups and issues related to names.

used in the schools.

### 1.1 The Problem

There is not much problem concerning usage of names when someone moves inside the same culture, but it may constitute a problem when migration takes place to another country where name traditions are different.

“According to Elsdon Smith, the author of several books on American names, the correct spelling and pronunciation of a person’s name should be based on the wishes of its owner who is, after all, the best authority in this matter.” Louie (1998:7).

Although all children are theoretically the owners of their own names, many decisions are made for them by the ones responsible for protecting their interests to the utmost until they reach adulthood. Most children are not aware that when their parents go to the Board of Education to register them to attend the Japanese schools, they are asked to choose a “common name”. This name will be the one by which they will be known in their daily school life. Parents and children are mostly unaware of the extension of what seems to be a simple act of choosing one family name and one given name<sup>7)</sup> will be and how it will affect the children’s lives and future attitudes.

Many relevant issues are taken into consideration together by parents, school teachers, and institutions such as the Board of Education. The choice for the use of a more Japanese-like name instead of a more ethnically-marked name seems to be the easiest solution to the problem of being different in a superficially “homogeneous” country like Japan. There is an important issue that although they are Japanese descendants, often they are of mixed parentage and only one of the parents is a nikkeijin. This fact makes them noticeable not only for their attitudes and different linguistic background, but also for their appearance which will announce their mixed ethnic background, so that only a change to a Japanese name will not be helpful enough to hide their differences.<sup>8)</sup> It will be discussed in detail how it creates new and more difficult

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<sup>7)</sup> Refer to Plutschow (1995) about Japanese names from a historical perspective.

<sup>8)</sup> Refer to Wu (1999) which discusses this issue in the case of Asian Americans.

problems such as the denial of the possibility of the children's positive contributions based on their different backgrounds and experiences.

We are all aware that personal names not only differentiate human beings from each other but also give a person identity and define one's social and ethnic memberships. Every culture has its own ways of naming people and we believe that these ways should be respected by the hosting society and the majority group in the case of migrants and minorities as part of their individual rights. Unfortunately, this right is not always considered where the status differences are great among the groups. Choices and changes are consciously or unconsciously imposed on the minorities, and these obviously create future problems<sup>9)</sup>. This study will describe particular cases of changes in the usage of names imposed on minority children even sometimes without their knowledge.

## 1. 2 Purpose of this study

The objective of this study is to make a holistic analysis of the usage of names of Brazilian children in Japan to check if the name that has been in use is true to the children's preferences. We intend to observe if the choices in the usage of personal names by some Brazilian children in Japan can serve as an indication of a change in attitude towards their culture and language. It is an ongoing process, nevertheless it will be demonstrated how the personal names<sup>10)</sup> are directly related to identity formation of the children. For this reason much more attention and care should be given when handling names, especially of minority children.<sup>11)</sup>

The focus of this research is to consider the different forces and power relationships influencing the naming process of minority children in Japan. The emphasis will be on different attitudes taken by newcomers and their effects toward changes in their naming tradition. It must be left clear, though, that it is not our intent to indicate which is the best choice, even if there is such a choice, because it is not of our concern in the first place.

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<sup>9)</sup> Refer to Jernudd (1995) which discusses personal names related to human rights.

<sup>10)</sup> Personal names refer to both given and family names of an individual.

<sup>11)</sup> Refer to Minzokumei wo Torimodosu Kai (ed.) (1990), Zai Nihon Daikan Minkoku Seinenkai (1994), Choe (1979) and Ijichi (1994) about the Koreans names issues.

### 1.3 Literature Review

The existence of an extensive literature on Onomastics<sup>12)</sup>, the study concerned with the content and process of all types of naming, demonstrates how this topic has been of interest to different areas of research. To give a few examples; in Lawson (1987), he compiled an annotated bibliography of 1,200 books on names and naming. It must be noted that this list is limited to books and articles printed in English. And then in Lawson (1995), the bibliography was expanded by almost 2,200 new items.

Matsumoto and Oiwakawa (1994) introduces different naming traditions in the so called developing countries. It points out that names are closely related to the culture of the region, religion, ethnic groups, and social groupings that people belong. And it states that names are historical products that undergo changes when people get in contact, are in conflict or are interchanging with others. It gives a description of the characteristics of Brazilian names as well.

Most of the literature on naming processes based on anthropological studies was primarily descriptive. Alford (1988:8) states: "The need for a systematic, cross-cultural study of naming seems clear". Alford accomplished this mission successfully, but he did not include the modern industrialized societies, since they are not covered by his area of cultural anthropology. There is also some recent literature on migrants to Israel and the issue of how they are named.<sup>13)</sup>

The great amount of studies on nikkeijin in recent years show how the topic has been calling the attention of researchers in different areas. Many of these studies are conducted by undergraduate students as a graduation thesis and by graduate students for a masters or doctoral degree. It is good for the field of nikkeijin studies that many researches are conducted but the methodology used and the objectives of conducting these studies must be questioned. Because of these studies, some cities in Japan have become famous nationwide after receiving attention by the media due to their Brazilian populations.

### 1.4 Importance of the Study

Although there is an extensive literature on names, Stahl (1992), about the process

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<sup>12)</sup> Refer to Lawson (1984) for a review of this area of study.

<sup>13)</sup> See Stahl (1994), Lawson and Glushkovskaya (1994).

of naming children and the ideological meanings of naming a child, the literature review did not discover studies with particular focus on the perspective of the children. Furthermore, no study focusing on names of newcomer children to Japan was found as it is our intention to demonstrate the problems of how their names are registered.

The main significance of this study is its contribution to better understand the children's views and feelings on how their names are used in Japan and to serve as an insight on what is happening with children of different ethnic backgrounds in schools in Japan. We also hope that it will serve as a hint to reevaluate past research and point out that the problems depicted relate to names not only of newcomer children but of minorities in general.

We believe that if different forms of names are more openly present in daily life, it will lead to a better acceptance of foreigners in general and contribute to an understanding of different styles of names. For this reason we believe that this study will be of great significance to the literature.

## 1.5 Methodology

All the examples of names analyzed in this study are names of real people gathered over five years. Many of them have already graduated from the “compulsory”<sup>14)</sup> schooling years, the elementary and junior high schools, some gave up studying for different reasons and some have returned to their countries, but many are still studying in the Japanese schools. Many of the examples came from firsthand knowledge, but since the children's names are very private information, the prefectures and cities of residence of the respondents are kept confidential for ethical reasons. It is our hope that this great zeal in protecting their rights for privacy, especially of the children in this study, do not put at risk the validity of the data and the study itself.

The major source of names is official name lists of children enrolled in Japanese schools at the Boards of Education in four different cities from the same prefecture in the Kansai region in Japan. All lists are for the exclusive use of officials at the Board of Education, but they were granted to us in recognition of a relationship of mutual trust and the compromise of long-term research to improve the conditions of foreign children enrolled in Japanese schools. It is our hope that this interrelationship of conduct-

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<sup>14)</sup> Schooling is compulsory only for Japanese Nationals, not for foreign ones.

ing mutually beneficial research and working for the good of the local community and the subjects of the research serves as a suggestion of a new way of conducting further researches.

Some of these lists were granted to us with the note that special attention should be taken when handling its private information. As a matter of fact, since this study does not aim to describe the name semantics or the etymology of names, we concluded that it is not relevant for each name to be made public for the understanding of the problems concerning the names and their usage. Instead, the use of fictitious typical examples of names based on real ones were considered to be sufficient to exemplify each case.

A list of names published in a Portuguese-language newspaper edited in Japan was also a source of names of some Brazilians living in Japan. A mixture of names of real people mentioned in newspapers was useful when forming fictitious names with all the relevant linguistic characteristics.

In the cases where the children's lists were available before visiting the schools, the children's backgrounds were checked beforehand. At first it was thought that the children who were not in the lists were newly arrived students, and that the names which appeared on the lists but were not present in the schools had moved away or returned to their home countries. But it was discovered that it was not the case for some students.

Most of the data was gathered during the five-year participant observations in the pulled-out classrooms. Students who were thought to be in need of more language assistance were pulled out during the classes which demanded more Japanese language skills in their regular classes and were gathered in a separate room.

Another great source of information was all kinds of activities within the community, which were very important to create a mutually beneficial relationship between the researcher and the subjects of the research. Different kinds of services were openly offered to the community, but some were made especially available by the researcher to the families interviewed in exchange for taking their limited time in giving interviews and providing information. The researcher joined an already existent group of volunteers teaching Japanese as a foreign language once a week on Saturday nights for five consecutive years.

A group was also formed to offer Portuguese language classes as a foreign language to Japanese interested in learning it. It was our belief that learning foreign lan-



languages by the Japanese was as important as teaching the newcomers the Japanese language; in other words a reciprocal effort to learn a foreign language is fundamental for mutual understanding to exist. Fortunately, some Japanese teachers who had contact with newcomer children took the initiative to learn the language of their students. This not only reflected positively on them in the sense that it introduced them to a culture almost unknown to them, but also helped them to understand how difficult, as well as time and energy-consuming, learning a language was. It helped them to switch from a teaching position to a learning one and better help their students in their process of learning.

Later the Portuguese language class was extended to Brazilian children who for the most part knew how to speak the language but did not know how to read and write it. Then Portuguese was also offered once a week as a native language course.

Data were also gathered during the extra-curricular activities, events welcoming foreigner's participation within the community, Japanese classes during summer vacations, and all kinds of gatherings where the newcomer children would meet. Informal interviews were conducted for junior high school students, while for elementary school students we awaited an opportunity when the children would make a comment on their names or talk about them in different situations where they would introduce themselves to others, etc.

A special technique of asking and gathering data about names had to be developed. This included asking for the "Real names", the names at school in their home countries, noticing how the names were written in the lists of students, the name plates, exams, how they were addressed by teachers, classmates, parents, relatives, friends, etc. Interviews of parents also turned out to be necessary to confirm the information gathered.

We believe that the questions of validity are solved by using multiple field research techniques with varied perspectives, from multiple procedures and from different points in time, thus creating a strong base for construction of valid hypotheses and generalizations.

## **2. Process of Registration of names**

Each Japanese city has a Board of Education at the municipal level, which has the centralized information of all the public schools: elementary, junior and high schools.

Table 1 : Number and kind of Brazilian Names registered by city

| Cities       | number of children | Given names |              | Family names |              |
|--------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|              |                    | Japanese    | Non-Japanese | Japanese     | Non-Japanese |
| A            | <b>59</b> (20)*    | 28          | 35           | 52           | 11           |
| B            | <b>54</b> (8)*     | 25          | 32           | 41           | 19           |
| C            | <b>76</b> (2)*     | 46          | 62           | 55           | 37           |
| D            | <b>32</b>          | 10          | 31           | 24           | 27           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>221</b>         | <b>109</b>  | <b>160</b>   | <b>172</b>   | <b>94</b>    |

\* The numbers between parentheses are the number of Brazilian children who had their names changed throughout the years and they were counted separately by city. They cannot be detailed in this study but some cases will be mentioned later based on **Table 3**.

Consequently, the information of all the students, Japanese and foreign, are divided in various subsections. It could be said that this is repeated at the prefectural level as well, and finally the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture centralizes all the information at the national level with the information gathered from all prefectures.

Always one person at the Board of Education is in charge for the newcomer children. This person controls their registrations, and gathers all the information from each school and makes the final name lists of all the students at municipal level to report to the person in charge at the prefectural level. Nevertheless, when a new student comes to register and this person in charge happens to be away from his or her desk just at that moment, anyone available does the registration of the foreign child.

The number of newcomer children in the region chosen to be researched has been increasing since the fieldwork was started. Although some schools were receiving newcomer children for the first time in the first year of fieldwork, all cities of this study had a previous experience receiving newcomer children. This is an important note since it means the existence of a form of registration already made by someone before this research started. Even after the public servants in charge were transferred, this form has been repeatedly used and relocated with very few alterations besides the updates on the information.

Basically, it could be said that an initial form has been used repeatedly since the first year a newcomer child came to register at the Boards of Education in these cities. Usually this style was made by the first person in charge of registering these students. As far as it concerns the cities investigated in this study, since there is no national unified form of registration of foreign children, it could be said that each city has a different form asking for different information. The list of names of the children at the Board

**Table 2 : Children with the Quantity and Name Types Unchanged in Cities A, B, C, and D**

| <b>GN-FN</b>   | <b>Names Types</b>             | <b>A</b>  | <b>B</b>  | <b>C</b>  | <b>D</b>  | <b>Total</b> |
|----------------|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| <b>2 Names</b> | <b>GN (J / NJ)-FN (J / NJ)</b> | <b>47</b> | <b>46</b> | <b>31</b> | <b>1</b>  | <b>125</b>   |
| 0-2            | <b>0-2 (1J -1NJ)</b>           | 1         | —         | —         | —         | 1            |
| 1-1            | <b>1 (1J)-1 (1J)</b>           | 23        | 17        | 12        | —         | 52           |
| 1-1            | <b>1 (1J)-1(1NJ)</b>           | 1         | 5         | 1         | —         | 7            |
| 1-1            | <b>1 (1NJ)-1 (1J)</b>          | 20        | 17        | 14        | —         | 51           |
| 1-1            | <b>1 (1NJ)-1 (1NJ)</b>         | 2         | 7         | 4         | 1         | 14           |
| <b>3 Names</b> |                                | <b>10</b> | <b>6</b>  | <b>40</b> | <b>24</b> | <b>80</b>    |
| 1-2            | <b>1 (1NJ)-2 (1J-1NJ)</b>      | 1*        | 1*        | 2*(×1)    | 4         | 8            |
| 1-2            | <b>1 (1NJ)-2 (1NJ-1J)</b>      | —         | 2         | —         | 7*(×4)    | 9            |
| 1-2            | <b>1 (1J)-2 (2NJ)</b>          | —         | —         | 2         | —         | 2            |
| 1-2            | <b>1 (1J)-2 (1J-1NJ)</b>       | —         | —         | 2***(×1)  | 1**       | 3            |
| 1-2            | <b>1 (1J)-2 (1NJ-1J)</b>       | —         | —         | 1         | —         | 1            |
| 1-2            | <b>1 (1NJ)-2 (2NJ)</b>         | 2***(×1)  | 1         | 5         | 6*(×4)    | 14           |
| 2-1            | <b>2 (1NJ-1J)-1 (1J)</b>       | 2         | 1         | 20        | 3         | 26           |
| 2-1            | <b>2 (1NJ-1J)-1 (1NJ)</b>      | 1         | —         | 6         | —         | 7            |
| 2-1            | <b>2 (2NJ)-1 (1J)</b>          | 2         | 1         | —         | 2         | 5            |
| 2-1            | <b>2 (2NJ)-1 (1NJ)</b>         | 2*        | —         | 2         | 1*        | 5            |
| <b>4 Names</b> |                                | <b>2</b>  | <b>1</b>  | <b>6</b>  | <b>7</b>  | <b>16</b>    |
| 2-2            | <b>2 (1NJ-1J)-2 (1J-1NJ)</b>   | —         | 1***(×1)  | 2         | 2***(×1)  | 5            |
| 2-2            | <b>2 (2NJ)-2 (1J-1NJ)</b>      | —         | —         | 4         | —         | 4            |
| 2-2            | <b>2 (2NJ)-2 (1NJ-1J)</b>      | 1         | —         | —         | 1         | 2            |
| 2-2            | <b>2 (1NJ-1J)-2 (1NJ-1J)</b>   | 1         | —         | —         | 3         | 4            |
| 3-1            | <b>3 (2NJ-1J)-1 (1J)</b>       | —         | —         | —         | 1***      | 1            |
| <b>Total</b>   |                                | <b>59</b> | <b>53</b> | <b>77</b> | <b>32</b> | <b>221</b>   |

● **GN** Given Name, **FN** Family Name, **J** Japanese and **NJ** Non-Japanese.

● \*A preposition, an article or combination of both was included but not counted as a separate name.

● \*\*One of the counted FN was *Junior* (Junior) *Filho* (Son) or *Neto* or *Netto* (Grandson). Although they are usually not counted separately, here in the study, they were.(×1) indicates that only one of the two Brazilian children had *Junior*, *Filho* or *Neto* or *Netto* as part of the FN.(×4) indicates that four of them had.

● \*\*\*In this case with three GN, two of them are a compound name, but as they form separate names for convenience they were counted separately.

● The **1st column** indicates how the **GN** and **FN** are arranged.The quantity of **GN** is indicated before the hyphen and after it the quantity of **FN**.

e.g.: **0-2** means that no GN and only two FN were registered. And **1-1** means one of each.

● The **2nd column** shows the name styles and the number of 'J' or 'NJ' GN and FN.

e.g.: **1 (1NJ)-2 (1J-1NJ)** means that one **NJ GN** and two **FN** were registered. Of these two **FN**, the numbers between parentheses indicated that in their original names, one was a **J** and the other a **NJ FN** in this sequence.It must be noted that it is not the sequence how they appeared in the name lists.This will be indicated and analysed separately.

● The **3rd column** to the **6th column** is the quantity of Brazilian children with its indicated name style in Cities A, B, C, and D. The **last column** is the total.

**Table 3 : Children with Change in the Quantity and Name Styles of Registered Names in City A, B and C**

|     | +  | 1st Registered Name | 1st change            | 2nd change            | 3rd change            |
|-----|----|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| No  | —  | Qty GN-FN           | Qty GN-FN             | Qty GN-FN             | Qty GN-FN             |
| 1A  | +2 | 0-2 (1J-1NJ)**      | 2(2NJ)-2 (1J-1NJ)**   |                       |                       |
| 2A  | +1 | 0-2 (2NJ)**         | 1 (2NJ)-2 (2NJ)**     |                       |                       |
| 3A  | +1 | 1 (1J)-1 (1J)       | 2 (1NJ-1J)-1 (1J)     |                       |                       |
| 4A  | +1 | 1 (1J)-1 (1J)       | 2 (1NJ-1J)-1 (1J)     |                       |                       |
| 5A  | +1 | 1 (1J)-1 (1J)       | 2 (1NJ-1J)-1 (1J)     |                       |                       |
| 6A  | +2 | 1 (1J)-1 (1J)       | 1 (1J)-1 (1J)         | 2 (1NJ-1J)-2 (1NJ-1J) |                       |
| 7A  | +2 | 1 (1J)-1 (1J)       | 1 (1J)-1 (1J)         | 1 (1J)-1 (1J)         | 2 (1NJ-1J)-2 (1NJ-1J) |
| 8A  | +2 | 1 (1J)-1 (1J)       | 2 (1NJ-1J)-2 (1NJ-1J) |                       |                       |
| 9A  | +1 | 1 (1NJ)-1(1J)       | 1 (1NJ)-1(1J)         | 1 (1NJ)-2(1J-1NJ)     |                       |
| 10A | +1 | 1 (1NJ)-1(1J)       | 1 (1NJ)-1(1J)         | 2 (1NJ-1J)-1(1J)      |                       |
| 11A | +2 | 1 (1NJ)-1(1J)       | 1 (1NJ)-1(1J)         | 2 (2NJ)-2(1NJ-1J)     |                       |
| 12A | =  | 1 (1J)-1(1NJ)       | 1 (1J)-1(1J)          |                       |                       |
| 13A | =  | 1 (1NJ)-1(1NJ)      | 1 (1NJ)-1(1J)         |                       |                       |
| 14A | =  | 1 (1NJ)-1(1NJ)      | 1 (1NJ)-1(1J)         | 1 (1NJ)-1(1J)         |                       |
| 15A | =  | 1 (1NJ)-1(1NJ)*     | 2 (2NJ)-0             |                       |                       |
| 16A | -1 | 2 (2NJ)-1(1NJ)      | 2 (2NJ)-0             |                       |                       |
| 17A | -1 | 2 (1NJ-1J)-1(1J)    | 2 (1NJ-1J)-1(1J)      | 1 (1J)-1(1J)          |                       |
| 18A | -1 | 2 (1NJ-1J)-1(1J)    | 2 (1NJ-1J)-1(1J)      | 1 (1J)-1(1J)          |                       |
| 19A | -1 | 1 (1NJ)-1(1J)       | 2 (1NJ-1J)-1(1J)      | 1 (1J)-1(1J)          |                       |
| 20A | -1 | 2 (2NJ)-1(1J)       | 1 (1NJ)-1(1J)         | 1 (1NJ)-1(1J)         | 1 (1NJ)-1(1J)         |
| 1B  | +1 | 1 (1J)-1(1J)        | 2 (1NJ-1J)-1(1J)      | —                     | —                     |
| 2B  | +1 | 1 (1J)-1(1J)        | 1 (1J)-2(1J-1NJ)      | —                     | —                     |
| 3B  | -1 | 2 (2NJ)-1(1NJ)      | 1 (1NJ)-1(1NJ)        | —                     | —                     |
| 4B  | -1 | 2 (1NJ-1J)-1(1J)    | 1 (1J)-1(1J)          | —                     | —                     |
| 5B  | -1 | 1 (1J)-2(1J-1NJ)**  | 1 (1J)-1(1J)          | —                     | —                     |
| 6B  | -1 | 2 (1NJ-1J)-1(1J)    | 1 (1J)-1(1J)          | —                     | —                     |
| 7B  | -1 | 2 (1NJ-1J)-1(1NJ)   | 1 (1J)-1(1NJ)         | —                     | —                     |
| 8B  | -2 | 2 (2NJ)-2(2NJ)      | 2 (2NJ)-2(2NJ)*       | 0-2(2NJ)*             | —                     |
| 1C  | =  | 1 (1NJ)-2(1NJ-1J)   | 1 (1NJ)-2(1NJ-1J)     | —                     | —                     |
| 2C  | =  | 2 (1NJ-1J)-1(1J)    | 2 (1NJ-1J)-1(1J)      | —                     | —                     |

• **A** means City A, **B** means City B and **C** means City C.

• \*A preposition or an article or a combination of both were included in the name but it was not counted separately.

• \*\*One of the names counted was *Junior* (Junior), *Filho* (Son) or *Neto* or *Netto* (Grandson) as part of the Family name.

• The **1st column** indicates each Brazilian child who had their names changed in the different name lists collected throughout the years in cities A, B and C.

• The **2nd column** shows if the quantity of names increased '+', if the same quantity was maintained '=', or if it decreased '-' after the changes. e.g. +2 indicates that two names were increased.

• The **3rd column** indicates the names registered in the oldest version of the name lists available. It is not the sequence of how the names appeared in the lists but in their original sequence.

• The **4th column**, **5th column** and **6th column** are how the names were registered after the first, second and third changes respectively.

of Education of each city are then registered differently. This is the reason of having them indicated separately in **Table 1**, **2** and **3**. Each city has a different tendency, the **Table 2** demonstrates which name style is more common in each of them. Unfortunately, the tendency of each city cannot be detailed separately in this study but just as an illustration, City A has mostly only two names registered. There is the case of one child, the first in the list of this same table who had only two family names registered and no given names. Also in **Table 3**, there are cases of other children who underwent changes in their names showing similar cases, see the case of **1A** and **8B**. Furthermore, refer to the cases of **15A** and **16A** in the same table for cases where only two given names were registered and no family names. Based on these facts it is difficult to believe that the parents would register only two family names without given names, or only two given names and no family names. These cases which cannot be further discussed here in detail<sup>15)</sup> put under suspicion who is the person who actually chooses the names.

Usually the registration is made by one or both parents of the child who is going to attend the Japanese school. Nevertheless, it is common in the case of parents who do not speak Japanese to have someone accompanying them to translate. Usually it is a person from the company the parents work for who is in charge of solving most of the problems for their employees for a fee, or a friend when available. There are some cases that this person does all the registration in place of the parents since in most cases both start working as soon as they arrive in Japan, and sometimes they are unable to take a day off.

It is common that the Alien Registration Certificates of the parents together with the documents of the children are taken for the enrollment process. As the names are written in the Roman alphabet in these certificates in most cases<sup>16)</sup>, the way these names will be written in Japanese will basically depend on how the person in charge for the registration will respond to this situation and process the enrollment.

Two ways of transliteration are possible at this stage. If the person at the Board of Education asks the parents or the person who came to do the registration to read the name slowly for him or her to write it down in Japanese, in these cases it can be seen

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<sup>15)</sup> It has been developed in the Ph. D. thesis still to be defended at the Faculty of Language and Culture in Osaka University.

<sup>16)</sup> Except people from countries which use Chinese characters.

the attempt to be faithful to the original pronunciation. Here it is left aside the question if they will be written down accordingly, but it must be pointed out that attention is paid to the original sound before transliterating it into Japanese.

The other possibility is the Japanese reading of what is written down in the Alien Registration Certificate with the Roman alphabet. In this process, importance is given to the spelling of the name, and there are high chances that the original sound will mostly have to be sacrificed. The system of romanization of Japanese will influence the reading of the name in these cases, and the name will be registered with many alterations in the sounds in this attempt to transliterate it into Japanese

## 2.1 How names are written in Japanese

Initially, according to the Japanese writing system, foreign names should be written using the *Katakana* syllabic writing system. Since there are only 48 syllables, it is necessary to recognize that there are linguistic limitations on the ways foreign names can be transliterated into Japanese. There are cases of increases in the number of syllables in a foreign name due to this syllabic system, which in most cases are unavoidable.

It could be said that names written using the *Katakana* writing system are generally a marked form for a loanword, consequently a foreign name. Nevertheless it is common to see a certain generation of Japanese women, especially old women, whose names are written using this writing system.

We would like to leave aside the discussion about the unavoidable cases where the accurate pronunciation has to be sacrificed for phonetic differences between languages. We would like to concentrate on the cases where the issue is not due to impossibility to be faithful to the original pronunciation, but where there are other reasons influencing the transliteration. The most common reason is the Japanese system of romanization.

When Japanese is romanized, two systems are most commonly used, a modified Hepburn system<sup>17)</sup> and the *Kunrei* system. It is still an unresolved issue of which system the Japanese government endorses, since both are used for different purposes. There are cases where names are pronounced so differently from the original that it is impossible to recognize them when written with *Katakana*. Here we would like to point out that it is very common among long-term foreign residents to feel uneasiness

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<sup>17)</sup> *Hebon* in Japanese, named after James Curtis Hepburn. Also known as *Hyojun* or Standard System.

and dissatisfaction about how their names are pronounced by Japanese nationals. There is a common ground of understanding when their names are mispronounced due to linguistic limitations. But most of the dissatisfaction seems to concentrate either in the lack of effort and interest in trying to pronounce it correctly, or heavy dependence on the romanization system of Japanese.

## 2.2 How names are written in Japanese

In the schools, the *Kunrei* system is taught and it is also used in the English text books. In the English classes this system is used when writing the student's names in a romanized form. It is of our knowledge that both Hepburn and Kunrei systems are taught as standardized romanized forms of Japanese. There is an important issue here which may be causing a big misunderstanding; that all that is written in a romanized form should be read based on the same rules. In reality, this system should be used only to romanize Japanese, and not to imply a Japanized pronunciation of everything that is romanized in other languages.

Since there is no official standardized form of transliteration of the foreign names into Japanese in the Alien Registration Certificates, it can be interpreted that a normalization would be troublesome regarding all languages. It is understandable then that different versions for the same name are created in different situations by different people. As different languages have different phonological systems, the most reasonable solution would be to be as faithful as possible to the original pronunciation by listening to the sound and writing it down using the closest sound possible in *Katakana*.

The people in charge of sections such as the Board of Education say that they normally ask the newcomers to pronounce their names before they proceed with the enrollment process and write their names down. However, there are cases where it is clear that the systems of romanization of Japanese are influencing the reading of foreign names. The most reasonable explanation for this to happen is that they simply transliterate the names which are in a written form in documents such as an Alien Registration Certificate into Japanese. It is important to note that this is usually the name which will be reported to the school and at last it will be the name by which the child will be addressed at school by teachers and classmates.

### 3. Brazilian children in Japanese Public Schools

In the schools there are two problematic situations where newcomer children's names are concerned. The first one is the case of young children who do not know their native language. The other situation is of children who do not know Japanese and learn it at school both in the regular classes and in the pulled-out classes.

Most Japanese children are introduced to the Roman alphabet and learn how to write and read it when they are in the fourth grade of elementary school. Many newcomer children who came to Japan when they were very little or were born in Japan never learned how to write their names in their native languages until they reach the fourth grade. Although the parents emphasize the importance of their native language and their wish that the children learn it parallel to the learning of Japanese, very few seem to be able to accomplish this with success. It turns out to be very difficult for the parents themselves to dedicate time to teach their children at home after coming back from work or during their very limited free time on weekends. For these children, the Japanese teacher in their regular classes is the first one to teach the children how to write their names using the Roman alphabet.

Those children who are using Japanese names at school have fewer chances of learning how to write their names without mistakes in the spelling. But it must be taken into consideration that their Japanese names might have a different spelling if priority was given to the sounding when registering these names in their own countries. It might not be the proper spelling according to the Hepburn system of Romanization, but it is their official name if it is the one registered in their Birth Certificates.

On the other hand, for those children who do not have Japanese names and have only ethnically marked names, the problem becomes more complicated. For those names which were registered with priority given to the original pronunciation, there are high chances that their names will be misspelled and taught that way unless careful attention is paid to that possibility. Even those names in which a preference for the spelling was stronger, there is no guarantee that it will be respelled correctly when romanizing what was transliterated into Japanese.

Having these situations in mind, one of the first things that a newcomer child is taught as soon as they arrive in a school is writing their names in Japanese. In most cases the names of the children are already known to the teachers because the registration is processed and their names are reported before the children actually start study-



ing in the schools. This means that generally there is already a written form of their names in Japanese which will be taught to the children. Much attention must be paid that there are cases where the names in the name lists are already transliterated not according to pronunciation. In these cases the children who do not know Japanese, even if they notice that their names are pronounced wrongly and are displeased with what they hear, are usually unable to correct it. There is the technical problem of communication, but in most cases they are so insecure and worried about the whole situation surrounding them that trying to discover the reason for the mispronunciation of their names turns out to be a minor point compared to the greater problems of adaptation.

Taking the example of the Hepburn system, it was initially used to have a standard romanized form of Japanese. However, the Kunrei system is taught in the school text books, and in the English classes it is the one used to write newcomer children's names in a romanized form.

In regards to this there are two interesting cases, both of Brazilian children. One arrived in Japan at the age for enrolling in the third grade of the Japanese elementary school system.<sup>18)</sup> He learned the Roman alphabet, not in his native language but in another language, as his parents had moved to a European country before coming to Japan. One of his names is a Japanese given name for boys, **Heisaku**, but originally it would not be written with an 'h' in the beginning if this name would be romanized in the Japanese style using any of the systems of romanization. But as names starting with an 'h' are not aspirated based on the Portuguese phonology, the original sound was preserved in Portuguese. When he arrived in Japan, his name was registered with no aspiration, preserving the sound of a Japanese name. Though, when he learned how to write his name with the Roman alphabet in Japan, he was taught with no initial 'H' in his name and learned to write it that way. After some years, his parents finally noticed that his name was misspelled according to his official documents such as his Birth Certificate and passport and he was taught the correct spelling by them.

The other is a case of a Brazilian boy called **Vanderlei** who knew Portuguese rather well and he was enrolled in the 5th grade of an elementary school in Japan based on his age. He was attending school until he came to Japan, so he obviously knew how

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<sup>18)</sup> In most cases of newcomer children nowadays, with a few exceptional cases, age is the only variable considered relevant to decide in which grade they should be enrolled in Japanese schools.

to write his name in his native language. The interesting case occurred when he entered in the junior high school and started learning English. In his English classes he was supposed to write his name using the Roman alphabet as were his Japanese classmates. He did not have a Japanese name, so his Brazilian name was transliterated into Japanese according to sound. There were changes in the sound using the Japanese Katakana writing system from the original /v/ sound to /b/ and the inclusion of the vowel /u/ after the consonant /r/ between syllables. He got used to his name pronounced in the Japanese way, but when he was asked to write his name in romanized form, he started writing his name with the same spelling as in all his official documents such as his Birth Certificate, passport and Alien Registration Certificate. When he wrote his name with that spelling in his English test, and the result was returned to him days after, he was surprised and frustrated with what his teacher did. She not only “corrected” the spelling of his name as ‘**Banderurei**’ using a red pen according to the Japanese rules of romanization but she took points from his test. He came to the pulled-out class of Japanese language education with this English test and very angrily told what happened. After hearing the reason for his revolt, the researcher asked if he told his teacher that his name was written that way originally. Although he said he had tried to convince his English teacher that he had written it correctly, at that first attempt she did not listen to him. After discussing with him that he should try again and teach her how to write his name correctly, he went back to his regular class to talk with her. He returned to the pulled-out class minutes later with a smile on his face not only because she listened to him this time but because he got back the points he had lost for writing his name with the correct spelling.

These cases demonstrate two situations which can be interpreted as very serious actions. Especially the second case could be considered even as an act of cultural insensitivity since the teenager was very much frustrated when his teacher did not listen to him in his first attempt. He had his correct name “corrected” by his English teacher, which probably would have continued him feeling that way and he would have had to continue writing his name with the wrong spelling if he did not want to lose points in all his English tests. It will be discussed further in the following section what happens in the schools.

#### 4. Discussion and Summary

We are all aware that personal names not only differentiate human beings from each other, but also give a person identity and define his/her social and ethnic memberships. Every culture has its own ways of naming people and we believe that these ways should be respected as an individual's right.

In the case of the Brazilian children's names, it was discovered that the origin of a great number of the problems with names was very serious clerical errors in the process of registration of the names at the Board of Education. If their names are transmitted incorrectly to the schools, even before the child starts attending the schools, the members of the school community, teachers and classmates address the child wrongly based on incorrect information. There were many cases where the newcomer child does not know why his name has changed. His low proficiency in Japanese does not allow him the opportunity to correct his name, and he is continuously addressed by that name until he gets used to it or has a chance to correct it.

In the case of Brazilian names<sup>19)</sup>, it could be observed that they undergo change as a part of the process of Japanization. **Table 3** gives a list of the cases of children who underwent changes throughout the years. Some had the number of names increased, others had them exchanged and others had them decreased. Some showed the tendency to avoid ethnic names and have only Japanese names registered as in the cases of **17A**, **18A**, **19A** and **20A** in **Table 3**. Others had their ethnic names included as the cases of **3A** to **11A** in the same table shows. So, one change could happen due to Japanese having only one family name and one given name, and the order of the Brazilian name being changed from the original given names first, followed by the family name. There were also cases of "Englishization"<sup>20)</sup> of Brazilian names, when romanized forms of the names were pronounced as in English, differently from the original Brazilian pronunciation.

The children's reactions were the most varied. One child found difficulty in understanding how Japan, a country renowned for its technical development, was unable to do such an easy task as pronouncing his name correctly. There were children who got

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<sup>19)</sup> Refer to Thonus (1991) about Brazilian female names, Matsumoto and Oiwakawa (1994) about Brazilian names in general and Moser (1960) about Portuguese family names.

<sup>20)</sup> This word was preferred over Anglicization because of its strong emphasis on the language aspects, more than on the cultural ones which Anglicization might imply.

very annoyed at having their names mispronounced and misspelled every time, but there were those who were very understanding and preferred to use their Japanese names while in Japan in order to help the Japanese to pronounce their names even when they preferred another name. There were children who had clear rules of switching names according to the language being used, or the person they are talking to, as well as the country where they were.

Some children did not want to use their ethnic names after they discovered that there is an association to a Japanese word which they do not like the meaning of. There are cases where the opposite was felt by children who did not like to be called by the Japanese name in their home countries. The form they are introduced to on the first day of school in most cases determines the name the child will be called while in that school. Due to the lack of ways of communication, the child is usually introduced according to the Japanese tradition. Their opinion is not always asked before the introduction. When they start being called by the Japanese names, no opportunity is left for them to be called differently in case they have a preference for a certain name or a style of it.

If changes in names were self-initiated by the child, problems would be diminished. But unfortunately, some people change or deform the foreign children's names in a way that makes them easier for the speaker to pronounce. In other words, it is mostly based on the convenience of the person addressing, and does not take into consideration whether the name chosen pleases the one who is being addressed. It is important to remember that there is a clear power relationship between the one being called and the one calling, between the teacher and the student, between the officer at the Board of Education and the parents which inherently makes reciprocity difficult.

Regardless of cultural backgrounds, languages spoken, and religious beliefs, parents and families choose a name with utmost care upon the birth of a child. Names function as self-identification, and as one's social and ethnic identity marker. There are many cases where the aspect of the child's identity is totally neglected by both parents and the school. This paper discussed the case of the Brazilian children but there are high probabilities that these problems are common to other minority groups living in Japan as well.

The question is not to find out which is the best way to address or to write one's name, but the name the child wants to use and be identified with. We need to know

their reasons and respect them. Problems of pronunciation and distinguishing a given name and a family name exist, but it is important always to remember that other cultures have other ways and rules of naming. Always resorting to the Japanese way of naming should be avoided. If the name of a child is misspelled from the beginning of school, this creates a problem for the children's future integration in the new school culture. Trying to conceal the different backgrounds of the children by using only the Japanese names at school will not solve the children's problems in adapting to a different environment. It is a fact that there is a need to accept more differences in order to make children feel comfortable to name themselves by the names they want to be called. Every child has an identity linked to a certain form of his name. Many Koreans in Japan have already chosen to continue not using their ethnic names.<sup>21)</sup> They have suffered and continue to suffer prejudice. However, to accept new and old cultural and linguistic diversity seems to be the right way to start. These constraints will influence the attitude of the children towards the choice of names and their identity formation in the future. The same care given not to write the wrong Chinese character when writing Japanese names should be given to other people of different ethnic backgrounds.

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<sup>21)</sup> There are nevertheless some groups' efforts to recover their ethnic names but it could be said that the great majority still uses their "common names" in their daily lives because they still face prejudices at all levels within the society.

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